Psalm 46 726

Matt 21-v 23 531

written -
Postponement Children Lessons
Dr Hodge -

He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.

Matt. XII. — 30.

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These are solemn words - and they are fraught with a solemn meaning. Such a saying ought at once to arrest our attention, for heaven knows that the best of us are none too decidedly for Christ - nor too resolutely bent upon gathering with him. Is it true then that we for as we are simply indifferent toward him and his work the weight of our lives unavoidably though so far as we are conscious unconsciously - is against him.' -

The ~~declaration~~ text has that ~~sort of~~ ring of genuine, positive assurance, which compels

our dispute - and forces us to look into the reasons upon which it may rest.

Of open and avowed hostility to the cause of Christ - we have no occasion here to speak. - Obviously Jesus was not speaking of his direct enemies - and if he were the time has gone by when the Christian world has anything to fear from them. -

There is still in use the old phraseology about the shame of the cross - of the Christian's being despised and rejected of men; perhaps also there are some imaginative minds who really believe that their religious

stands every day in mortal peril - from some ~~enraged~~ and mighty adversary. - But in truth Christianity has already vanquished its formidable foes. - No weapon raised against the truth of the gospel has ever prospered. - Many critics in all periods of her history have assailed the church and they have been instrumental in freeing her from grievous errors and abuses, which though entirely alien to the great ideas ~~which~~ which she had in keeping - had crept into her organization. - But every attempt to uproot Christian truth from the throne of its supremacy over the human mind has most signally failed. - Anti-Christians

from the imperial ~~dia~~thors of the great persecutions downward. have never been able to stay for an instant the work of christian ideas,- and it is entirely foolish to fear them to day-

Let the cloud of this fanaticism or conceit swell its threatening front,- its winds scatter nothing but chaff - and they who have laid hold upon the realities of our religion - Know that they are to be moved by no such idle vaporing.- -. But there is to day an Anti-christian position - and it is the special characteristic of our age that such great numbers have drifted into or taken from choice that position.- It is against this phase of religious thought, or absence

of religious thought - as the case may be -
that the text speaks. - I do not pretend
that it is more dangerous to christianity
than the aggressive anti-christian thought. -
That is to say - christianity will without
doubt in my judgement - keep what ground
it has gained. - despite indifference or
antagonism. - It would be doing grave
injustice to the extra-christian to represent
him as in any sense a ~~direct~~ conscious
foe to the church; it would betray a fatal
lack of faith in the meaning of her history
if we forbode the downfall of the church
because any class chose to desert her. -
Suppose the class be intelligent and cultivated -

There was a time when nearly all the world's culture stood arrayed against a band of untutored fishermen - and they conquered. It is a question now as then, not where is the most familiarity with classic lore, but who speaks the greatest - purest idea out of his own conscience, - and it seems not as to doubt that the christian has that advantage. - It might be said indeed that the class which puts itself above or outside of the methods of christian work - without assuming hostility of attitude - does nevertheless wilfully deprive the church of much possible power - and is thus in one sense hostile to her influence. - There would be this more excuse for this view because

the class to which it refers is precisely the one most needed by the Church – and it must be itself sensible of this fact. – When people know that their character & thought and energy brought to the service of the Church would vastly extend her power, yet deliberately deprive her of their help, – one might be pardoned from inferring from their inactivity hostility to the influence of the Church. –

Still I say again they should be judged by their intent – and treated not as enemies – but as passive friends: – and I would they could be shown how true

it is, what the text charges upon them—
that their course results in just the opposite
of what they intend.— I know they do not
~~intend~~ mean to place any hindrance in the
way of christian work— and not for the world
would I so claim that wrong to charge
upon them a contrary purpose.— Nevertheless
it is true that in refusing to gather with
christ they do scatter abroad; and not
only in the name of the church— but
also in behalf of their own consciences
which are chated and blind by the actual
results of their indifference— would I appeal

to them to review their position - and look well to its influence. -

There are presumably two lines of thought which lead many against whose personal integrity and purity no charge can be maintained - to declare themselves either in words - or by lack of words extra-christian. - One is a disposition to measure the church by her failures - and the limitations imposed upon her by the narrow minded men who have governed her councils. - Christianity, as some people honestly suppose has consisted in belief that christ embodied the fulness of the

Godhead, in the resurrection of the body - in the doctrine of eternal punishment - in the vicarious atonement - or in whatever literal doctrines it may have been that made up the formularies creed of the church. - They say with a very liberal [illegible] that these beliefs have been and still are helpful to the mind which [illegible] entertains them. - and ought therefore to be ~~peacefully~~ probably allowed to work out their mission. - They would not break up the cradle in which many religious natures have been nurtured. - Nevertheless the cradle must be outgrown. - Christianity is a cradle - and therefore it befits them who have arrived at [illegible] and womanhood, to put it aside. -

But is not that a false analogy between Christianity and any dead inorganic fact? – Our religion is alive as truly as man lives. – It has kept pace with his expanding life, – and being purified of the error which man's impure nature had itself foisted upon it – has afforded as much spiritual nourishment to nineteenth century souls – as under the personal ministrations of the Church Fathers. – By what authority then is it declared that at length Christianity has reached the limit of its growth – and must be left behind in the march of mind? Why have not we as abundant reason to work for and expect a development of christian thought as Luther

hood - and how shall we we be convinced that a ~~the~~ inner interpolation of the gospels - will not always as it has in the past - bring out the highest truth as fast as the mind is able to grasp it?

Moreover it is useful to remember that our judgement of the capabilities of any living thing - should be based not upon its lowest but its highest performance. - If you wish to illustrate the fruit bearing quality of a tree - you do not select from its yield the smallest specimens - nor yet those of average size - you take - and justly enough - the very finest and largest you can find. - Because they show - what under perfect conditions the ~~the~~

tree is capable of doing.- Its less perfect results are attributable to some defect in its own life - or to unfavorable surroundings.- If you would know what the tree was designed to bear suck out its noblest fruit.- So it is not right to take the beliefs of the middle ages perpetuated till the present time as exponents of the power of Christianity.- They do not at all represent its spirit.- and illustrate nothing else so well - as the distortions which great ideas are made to suffer - when entombed in the keeping of narrow minds.- Choose rather the truest exalted thought, the purest faith, and the best hope that any christian has ever attached to the word - and let that stand

for what Christianity was meant to be.- No
matter what superstition may still cling to
the masses!- Let the so-called christian- forget
their interpretation of christs teaching. and read
in his pure idealism - the truth which through
all christian history has been struggling for
expression in the forms of life.- Then let him
signify his wisdom. not by admitting that
the world is right in claiming to have found
its expression,- ~~but~~ and that therefore he is no
christian,- but by showing to the world that
he more truly merits the name - the
meaning of which they have not begun to
fathom.-

The other phase of mind. - (if that can be called a phase which is for the most part negative) which silently takes an ~~anti~~ Extra - Christian position - is characterized simply by indisposition to limit ourself in any way - by union with any branch of the church. - It might be inferred from this statement that I consider those who esteem themselves above the duty of action with the church - as virtually setting themselves above Christianity - and if any so infer they will not go wide astray of my meaning. - - as the world seems to be still afflicted with the fallacy that freedom is merely a negation - and instead of being positive self-control - is rather absence

of all control, so - many people seek religious liberty not merely by securing themselves against interference with such modes of worship as they may adopt - but by detaching themselves from all forms of public worship. The Church is a good institution - they make no doubt of that; - very useful to whoever may feel an interest in it; - and perhaps not without influence upon public morals. - But for themselves they do not feel a need of its help - nor do they recognize any obligation to co-operate in extending its help to others. - So they either stand aloof from the Church, or roam about here there and yonder, as fancy may dictate.

or whenever the name of a great ~~Doctor~~ preacher attracts their attention.- By this means they do not escape the infliction of a great many dull sermons.- But by what right they command butterfly-like only the sweets of things- and appoint others to labor that their souls may be fed upon Saintins, does not appear.=

Thus they seem to say to the world we are a great deal too wise to take any active part with your religious institutions.- They are doubtless very well - and we will patronize them somewhat.- But we object to limiting ourselves by their methods and purposes. We wish to preserve our freedom.-

Now I say that in assuming to be above the Church they proclaim themselves in a measure to be extra-Christian. - It is true that some of the noblest Christians - and greatest and best friends the Church has had - have withdrawn from her. - In their isolated positions - they draw attention from all real from spoken or still speak words which have been a perfect revelation to the Church - of the real significance of her own truth. - But it is not every extra Christian who proves an Emerson or Carlyle. - - It is true also that this is a personal religion, a Christianity of the closet - which is independent of public-worship.

I do not forget that Jesus often went apart by himself to pray – or that he exhorted his followers to pray to the Father which is in secret. – I know that in every heart there is a hope and faith which evermore asserts itself – a shrine in every soul upon which the flame of religious life must quite die out, – Nevertheless I assert as a general truth which the common experience will sanction – that in social worship – where two or three are joined together – sentiments and emotions – [illegible] thoughts are made possible to each – which separately they cannot experience. – explain it how you will – it is the fact that through the sympathy of kindred souls a [illegible] life comes into them, – and this

no less than personal religion - is our indispensable element of the power of christianity. Over this the people who look about from churches assume to be superior - and in this sense they are to be regarded as extra-christian. - That they are not such - in the best, thus derived - although I most firmly believe - it is no part of my present purpose to attempt to prove. - But let me say in passing that (or entering kindly into its methods of work) uniting ourself with the church does not at all mean surrendering ones religious freedom. - No union is effected it is true without compromise. - but that compromise only to the purpose for which union exists -

and does not limit the individual within his own sphere.— Even of the Church Councils of the early ages of middle ages— it is wrong to suppose that expressed all the Christian belief of their day.— The basis laid down by them was only what all believed in common.— Beyond that individuals might think as far as they pleased.— It was of course a tyranny — because many chose to think in direct antagonism to the established basis of union.— But the problem which our day has more nearly solved is to find the agreement beneath all differences — in honest with which every sane mind

thinks - - and it may now be claimed that any save a captious mind - may mind christian organizations with whose spirit he can be thoroughly at one - and yet make no sacrifice of his own thought and belief. -

And now having the extra-christian as fairly before our minds as I know how to present him - let us see in what direction the influence of his position tends. - He wishes well to the church - because it is necessary to the well being of certain classes. - - He professes ~~professes~~ a friendship - not altogether free from it is true patronage, toward Christ and his teaching, believing that the world has for the most

part misunderstood both — In intent as in name he is at least not thin foe — What is he in reality? I desire to call your attention to one word in the text — the that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad — what is it then to "gather" — as christ in that word describes his work? — What is it but to fulfil the ancient purpose of the universe — which brought it out of chaos — and inspires every item of solid growth and improvement — What have the laws of nature done but gather the wild and lawless elements into forms of beauty & order — built after

permanent types? — What more has the labor and ingenuity of man achieved — than to gather out of the chaos of barbarism — and weave into institutions, permanent in proportion as they approach the ideal, — the elements of social life? This was the work of Christ; to gather up the scattered hopes & beliefs of men into one great central faith in God; — to unite the petty desires of only a lifetimes duration into one great shining aspiration for righteousness — to bind the sinful motives by which men had striven to regulate their conduct into one all controlling sentiment of love. — This was to bring order out of religious chaos — and this

was the Lesson Christ set himself to make possible to the world. — If you wish to see a religion based upon complete individuality and nothing but individuality. — you may find it in fetichism. — Then without doubt every man believes just as he pleases. — & worships his own God after his own fashion. — If you would see a religion in which individuality springs out of one universal faith kept always in mind — so that however widely men may [illegible] in their thought they can always find their way back to a common place of meeting, — look to the ideal which has always lain at the basis of the christian church

and which it is her mission to realize.—
Between the two there is precisely the difference
that exists between chaos and order.
In fetichism there are the elements of
a perfect religion.— but there is nothing
to bring them into obedience to any common
law.— The work of Christianity is to gather
them up into an organic whole: by leading
each and all to voluntarily contribute to
a common end.— It is not an arbitrary
system enforcing over the race by external
pressure — artificial relationships: though it
the Popes have so declared.— Its faith is
that there are natural centres of truth

about which a more perfect life will of its own accord ~~[illegible]~~ bind itself into orderly forms - and thus unless it obtains christ formed. - -

Now in the natural universe - we are told that the worlds are so nicely balanced - ~~that~~ and their interdependence ~~is~~ so close - that if from any cause one should leave its orbit - the arrangement of the whole would be sensibly affected.

Not only would the lack of its power in its accustomed place be felt - but the lawless planet would be at once transformed into a positive disturbing influence. - In the

nature of things, it could not be otherwise.
for being gifted with a certain amount of force
which it cannot choose but exercise - the
very instant that it ceases to act in harmony
with other worlds, that instant it begins
to act against the common order.-

In like manner every mind is a center of
force and either that force must be expended
in gathering with christ or scattering abroad.-
In other words if it refuses to accept the ~~order~~ system
of nature - the system of history - and consecrate
its energies toward ~~a harmony~~ perfection of that order, for
which the foundation is already laid - it becomes
the disturber of that order.- I see no escape from

this conclusion,- we must help the world onward toward a perfect christianity - or pull it back toward fetichism.- In taking an extra christian position does not one say as definitely as he could say in words that the ideal of religious union is valueless?- and what is that but to declare that it is indifferent whether there be one conscience and one faith amongst men? Observe - that is precisely the religious advance that has been made - to evolve from a shifting and conflicting conscience - some common standard of right to which men may ~~peacably~~ peaceably appeal,- to move wild and superstitious ~~sp~~ speculation about the deity to some uniform

faith in God - which may serve as the basis of theological reasoning. This has been the tendency of christianity - and to assume to have advanced beyond that - is to assume either that the world is now perfect - or that its perfection is to be found in the contrary direction toward spiritual anarchy and confusion. Take what the past has done and carry that on to completion - or destroy its work and return to the point from which it set out: These are the only alternatives left us - for when we reject that order which the ages have travailed to bring forth - we stand not above it but against it. You who do not like the doctrines of the church shall assail them as vigorously

as you are able - when you have caught the true idea of which these were partial expressions and thus established the basis of a broader union. - Until then you are only seeking to scatter elements which you have no power to recombine. - You who think it ~~is~~ worth your while to seek christian fellowship. - ~~You~~ should indulge your solitary inclination to the utmost when you can satisfy your conscience that both yourself and the world have grown to the full stature of that divine humanity which Jesus exemplified. - but until then your isolation makes against christian [illegible]. —

who dares proclaim that the past is a mistake.
its beginning wrong - its growth all awry.
that christian history is a delusion or imposture.
let him call himself extra-christian!

who dares say that the laws of God are
incompetent to guide the course of human
events - and that to him is revealed the
truth which will draw men hearts
together into one — let him declare himself
above the sphere of christian activity.—

who dares to teach that nothing is better than
something - a doubt than a belief — a negation
than an assertion. - a desert than a garden
let him set himself higher than the
mission of christ. — But we who have not
ready to think or teach these things leave

nothing better to do than work with the church - and for its development into the perfect instrument of its great founders spirit. -

You young men however - let not your minds be taken captive by the skepticism of the day - or led away by the notion that it is some new and nobler thing than the world has seen. - Not a doubt that modern thought has suggested - but is as old and stale as time itself. - They are doubts which every thinking christian has weighed before you. - If you will use them to purge the dross from christian thought - you shall do well - But in themselves alone - apart from the positive ideas which they may have

power to modify - they are flat & profitless -
are
may; they, the enemies of every living soul. -

Our Lord I ask your allegiance to the
Church - not that blind allegiance which
exalts her errors into infallible truths. -
but the loyalty of intelligent sons & daughters -
eager that she shall be true to herself & fulfill
her mission. - anxious that all her faults
may be exposed and laid aside - in order
that the great fundamental ideas upon
at length
which she stands may, gather all mankind
together into one family of love & faith & prayer -